



**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**  
**Monitoring Network Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Suisun Bay,**  
**California**

**INTRODUCTION**

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the installation of pilings and associated monitoring equipment in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Suisun Bay, California (CA).

USGS is the lead federal agency for this action and completed the EA in August 2021. The EA was released to the public for a 15-day comment period on August 30, 2021.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has operated and maintained a monitoring network in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta since the 1970's. Over time, as technology improved and monitoring needs changed, the network has expanded to include more locations and additional parameters. The overarching goal is to collect flow, water quality, and fish movement data at stations throughout the region. To support this monitoring objective, there is a need for additional infrastructure at new locations.

Locations of each station were identified based on the scientific needs of the monitoring network. The project will occur in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, the Lower Sacramento River, the lower San Joaquin River, and Suisun Bay within the counties of Sacramento, Yolo, Contra Costa, and San Joaquin. Within the general region, the project will occur only in navigable waters of riverine and estuarine deepwater systems.

Using a barge-mounted vibratory hammer, pilings will be driven to a depth of 30 feet during daylight hours. Installation per piling was estimated at one hour to complete, but this does not include attaching appurtenances. Installation is expected to take 5 years/seasons with work occurring during the August 1 - October 15 work window.

## **PROPOSED ACTION**

USGS proposes to install 180 pilings to support a modern and expanded monitoring infrastructure. Monitoring stations will consist of 18-inch steel pilings that will house an electronics box, an aluminum mount with an acoustic doppler velocity meter, one to several polyvinyl chloride pipes to house pressure sensors and/or water quality sondes, solar panels, and navigational safety signage. Several pilings associated with acoustic telemetry stations will be configured in a similar manner, but house different equipment to track fish migration through the reach.

## **ANAYSIS OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

The proposed action was planned and developed in coordination with CA State and local regulatory agencies. Measures were incorporated into the design to avoid and minimize the potential effects to environmental resources. The proposed action will have no long-term impacts on soils, geology, minerals, water quality/quantity, visual resources, air quality, aquatic resources, vegetation, noise, biological, cultural, aesthetic, socio-economic resources, or other environmental concerns.

The CA State Historic Preservation Office has concurred with the USGS determination of *no historic properties affected* for the proposed construction in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act (36 CFR 800).

Through formal consultation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) reviewed the proposed action for effects on biological resources. Though several sensitive plant, fish, and wildlife species are in the general area, the two services were concerned about the effects on specific threatened and endangered fish. The USFWS provided a biological opinion and concluded that the proposal would not likely adversely affect Delta Smelt critical habitat. The NMFS concluded "that the proposed action is not likely to adversely affect the ESA-listed Sacramento River winter-run Chinook salmon, CV spring-run Chinook salmon, CCC steelhead, CCV steelhead, and SDPS green sturgeon and designated critical habitats within the action area." However, the NMFS concluded "that the project would adversely affect the essential fish habitat of the Pacific Coast salmon, Pacific Coast groundfish, but not the coastal pelagic species."

The primary mitigation measure to ensure protection of sensitive species is to conduct work outside of spawning seasons. The EA also included research showing that total suspended solids from pile driving will be below thresholds having adverse effects on

fish.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Agency Coordination was part of the initial planning and design for the proposed action. In addition, the EA was made available for public review and comment on the CA Water Science Center news webpage and social media accounts, several newsrooms in the region, and targeted social media posts to Sacramento and Stockton areas.

The USGS did not receive any public comments.

#### **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

Following review of the attached Environmental Assessment and all comments received by *September 13, 2021*, the USGS concludes that the proposed project is not a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of NEPA of 1969. Therefore, an environmental impact statement for the installation of 180 pilings and appurtenances is not required.

#### **RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL**

---

Eric Reichard

Date

Director for CA Water Science Center, Southwest Region  
NEPA Responsible Official, United States Geological Survey